

Jerry's Substitute

BY — Arthur Wallace Peach

THE never-to-be-forgotten letter came on the never-to-be-forgotten morning in February, when, because the day was mild and the sun very bright, old Jerry Stacey and his cronies, Ebrom Barnes, had begged to be permitted to sit for a while on the east porch of the main house at the town farm for the rest. They had always been out-of-door men, and the short days of winter told on their patience. Mr. Mayes, the farm manager, agreed that the stimulating warmth of the sun would do them good.

Most of the other inmates of the farm were put to hard work, but the working days of Jerry and Ebrom had been over for years; in their day they had been hard and willing workers, but the time had come when Ebrom's fingers lost their strength, until now it was about all he could do to hold his knotted cane, polished from long use. Jerry's hands were still muscular, but his once sturdy legs—as a result of a stroke of paralysis—had weakened so that he was obliged to move very carefully, or be compelled to wait for reinforcements, which Ebrom usually brought.

But the years together had been cheery ones, for indeed these two had long followed an ancient philosophy which defines the happiest man as the one possessing the fewest wants. Then came the wonderful letter.

Ebrom and Jerry were always on hand when the mail carrier drove up to the house, although their being there was a mere matter of form, for letters never came to them. There was no one to write to them.

But that letter! The mail carrier was a young fellow, and he waved the letter at them in boyish fashion as they waited. Both the old men held out their hands until he said, "For you, Uncle Jerry." Then Ebrom drew his hand back.

Jerry looked at the letter, and turned it over with clumsy hands. He knew Ebrom's fingers could not hold it or he would have let him feel of it; for that letter was a real letter. But Ebrom could look at it, so Jerry held the dainty thing out and Ebrom bent far over until he could see clearly through his near-sighted eyes.

"Why, Jerry, say, Jerry—it looks like a little girl's writing!" he exclaimed in his excited drawing back.

Jerry studied it. "Yes, sir, it do, Ebrom. Reckon I better open it. Ebrom? he asked diffidently.

"Well, I guess you ought to—it's a real letter. Who you suppose it's from?" Ebrom questioned.

Jerry, glad of an excuse to postpone the exquisite joy of opening the letter, lit the envelope sag in his hand and darted from his attempt to find his knife. He squinted reflectively. "Uncle Ebrom, I can't guess. It's a gosh-a-gosh a good many years now since anyone wrote me. I declare I dunno. But—she's goin' to be a name in there."

Ebrom. It isn't a thick letter, but it's a real one, eh, Ebrom?"

And Ebrom agreed again with a nod of his white head.

Jerry's eyes were still good—in fact he was eyesight for both, and after he had carefully opened the little gray envelope, Ebrom drew up and looked over his shoulder—a mere matter of formality that showed his interest.

Jerry cleared his throat, ready to begin. He read slowly to the accompaniment of the gentle murmur of the big pines near the house, the clucking of fowls in the barn, the varied and picturesque harmony of the bright February day.

"My dear Uncle Jerry—Ebrom's acquainted with me she knows me!—My dear Uncle Jerry—I wonder if you will remember me? I'll wager you, won't—Ebrom, I haven't got the least idea—but don't you remember years and years ago a little girl—Ebrom? it's a girl! Ebrom! See! it's a right little girl—girl!—a little girl who wasn't very well whom you used to take riding on your big lumber wagon, to whom you told stories evenings and whom you carried in your arms till she fell asleep? That was years ago!"

Jerry stared across the meadow. After a little while, he turned to Ebrom. "It's Little Ruthie Blake—that's who it is—little Ruthie Blake."

He turned to the letter with a sigh.

"I have never forgotten you, Uncle Jerry, although I have lived so far away, and many changes have taken place, for mother used to say—"

Ebrom, that means Mary Blake's dead. My! we ol' fellers'll be the last that letter was a real letter. But Ebrom could look at it, so Jerry held the dainty thing out and Ebrom bent far over until he could see clearly through his near-sighted eyes.

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Jerry slowly shoved the sheet



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back into the envelope after many (should it was to his satisfaction) fruitless attempts for his hands were trembling. The two sat in silence looking out with faded eyes over the long familiar landscape. Ebrom's gnarled hand rested upon the smooth head of his cane.

"Ebrom, I've been thinkin' all night, an' I've decided that it wouldn't do for me to go to visit Ruthie—"

Ebrom turned his white head. "Not ya, Jerry?—Why—why, Jerry, what's wrong?"

Jerry rubbed one of his knees. "Ebrom, you see, I can't get around the way I used to, an' like as not, if I tried to go, I'd get so done up I couldn't walk no more. But, Ebrom—I've been thinkin', an' here's what I'm going to do—I'm goin' to send you!" Jerry leaned back to note the effect of his surprising words on his friend.

Ebrom's cane thumped on the floor as he turned. "Send me, Jerry? Why, Jerry, that—no, no!" he replied hurriedly, but through his words ran the buoyant thrill of a wonderful hope.

"Jerry, you've got to go!" Jerry leaned over and his voice was low. "Ebrom, you've got to go!"

As Jerry turned the situation over and over, that night's big idea began to take shape; long he debated it with himself, and the big click of the ball downstairs pounded out with slow rheumatic strokes the hour of twelve before he had decided it, but

You're a friend of mine now, but you All there is to it, Ebrom, you've got to, you'll be away from this place for years. If I see Mr. Mayes, you begin to plan what you're going to wear, and it can all be fixed—

"But, Jerry—she wanted you to come, it ain't done fair by her when she's been thinkin' all night!" Ebrom urged.

Jerry thought a minute. "Ebrom, that's easy; you go an' be me, see?"

She won't know; she was a mite of a little thing back in them days. I can tell you all that she will ask about them little stories you can easy re-member, oh, don't you say a word, Ebrom. I know we can work it. It was years ago when she saw me last; her mother ain't with her, and no one will guess. They'll expect an old fellow to keep still. Now I'll see Mr. Mayes, an' ask him if it'll be all right."

Ebrom argued, but his voice and arguments were not convincing—in fact they had begun to flutter with the dream that was forming in his mind.

As the speeding train brought him nearer to Glen Side, Ebrom began to lose heart a little; he became rather

as long as he lived, that they loved him, and wanted him to stay.

Ebrom was so agitated that he hardly knew what to say, so he went away softly, leaving Ebrom to bathe with himself.

Her offer seemed like a gift out of heaven, and his heart beat fast and furiously as he thought of what it would mean to live there in that beautiful place always! For one swift moment he dreamed of accepting it. Then he thought of Jerry. Jerry was the one they really loved, he told him self. Jerry was the one who ought to have the cottage. There was no doubt about it.

It did not take a long struggle for Ebrom to decide what he should do. He would have to confess everything; then no would return to the farm; perhaps they might take Jerry back in his place. But of that he was not sure.

A day went by, and according to his custom he was seated on the broad porch of the house, his hands clasped over his cane in the old way, while he pondered upon Jerry. Would they let him come? Had they ceased to care for him as a result of his deposition? He heard the big car honk the driveway and stop. He looked up from his brooding to see some one whom he recognized as Mrs. Thornton. She was getting out of the car, followed by a figure, which, to his half-shut eyes, seemed very familiar. He half started out of his chair as he recognized the odd, halting step; then his cane slid from his hands as the figure drew nearer and the astounding truth burst upon him. It was Jerry!

Jerry's smiling face came within his vision and their hands went out to each other. Neither said a word.

After the first joy of meeting was over, Ebrom went upstairs to pack his things, knowing now that Jerry had come, he must go back. As he stood before his eyes he saw stretching away into the future the long, lonely road at the farm without Jerry. Summoning all his will power he rubbed the mist from his eyes and bent to his work with fumbling hands. He paused once as he heard Jerry's happy, quavering voice come up the stairs. Mechanically he turned again to his packing.

"Hello, there, what are you doing? Packing up?" Mr. Thornton's big voice spoke from the corridor. "I guess not! Check that staff back!"

"But—but—ain't I goin' back—to—the farm?" Ebrom asked.

"Not a bit of it, man! You and Jerry are to have the cottage down the lane together. How's that hit you?" the cheer's voice went on.

Ebrom gripped the two heavy socks he had picked up, tight in his hands, choked as he tried to speak, and buried his shaking old face in the pillow. Dreams do come true!

First Published in The Guthrie Daily Leader, August 19th, 1916.

ORDINANCE NO. 1433.

An ordinance amending Chapter 2 of Revised Ordinances of 1915, City of Guthrie, and declaring an emergency.

Be it Ordained by the Mayor and Board of Commissioners of the City of Guthrie, Oklahoma:

Section 1. That Chapter 2 of the Revised Laws of 1915 of said City of Guthrie be and the same is hereby amended by adding thereto included, after Section 165 the following:

Section 167 A. All persons, firms or corporations operating and driving an automobile or other motor vehicle equipped with a brilliant or dazzling light commonly known as head-lights or front lights, when such lights are being used, shall have installed and shall maintain an adjustment or fixture over or upon such light or lights, which adjustment or fixture shall be a hood made of metal, leather or other suitable material and so arranged and attached over such light or lights that the direct rays from such light or lights when burning shall not be reflected or turned directly in front of such light horizontally above five feet on a level plane measuring one foot from such light or lights, or shall have and maintain in working order a device commonly known as dimmers or some other practical device which shall be so arranged, equipped and connected to said light or lights that such device arrests the brilliancy of such light or lights to the extent that they are not dazzling.

Section 167-B. The Commissioners of Public Safety is hereby given full power of inspection, regulation and supervision over the lights of motor vehicles and it shall be his duty to inspect and approve lights and determine whether the same are proper to be used and operated upon motor vehicles within said City. It shall be the duty of said commissioner to notify any and all persons using or operating any motor vehicle equipped with headlights upon which project or safeguards or devices have not been installed, to install the same within five days after such notice which shall be in writing and may be served in person or by mail. A certificate of approval signed by said commissioner shall be prima facie evidence that the equipment or device approved by said Commissioner complies with the conditions of this ordinance. The refusal of said commissioner to approve any light as herein mentioned shall be considered

as prima facie evidence that such light is being operated or used in violation of the provisions of this ordinance and any person refusing, failing or neglecting to keep the head or lights herein mentioned in an approved manner or with an approved device as specified by said ordinance, shall be deemed guilty of a misdemeanor, and on conviction thereof shall be punished as provided by section 178 thereof.

Section 167-C. It shall be unlawful for any person to operate, ride or drive any motor vehicle in such manner and under such circumstances that a loud and unusual amount of noise is created thereby or to render upon any road or street any motor vehicle or other vehicle that has an explosive type of noise for more than within 250 feet of any public school, hospital or church in said city in such a manner that said noise is thereby escaped.

Section 2. That an emergency is hereby declared to exist for the preservation of the public peace and safety by reason whereof this ordinance shall take effect immediately upon its passage, approval and publication.

Passed and approved this 18th day of August, 1916.

J. E. NISSELY,

Seal—Attest: Mayor

GEO. L. ANDERSON,

City Clerk.

(First published in The Guthrie Daily Leader, August 19, 1916.)

ORDINANCE NO. 1434.

An ordinance levying upon certain lots in the City of Guthrie, Oklahoma, a special tax for street sprinkling and street cleaning and declaring an emergency.

Be it Ordained By the Mayor and

Commissioners of the City of

Guthrie, Oklahoma:

Section 1. That a levy of One (\$1) and one-half (\$1.50) mills on the dollar of the assessed valuation for the year 1916, be and the same is hereby made upon the following lots in the City of Guthrie, Oklahoma, for Street Cleaning:

Guthrie Proper

Lots.

1 to 12 inclusive.

13 to 24 inclusive.

25 to 36 inclusive.

37 to 48 inclusive.

49 to 60 inclusive.

61 to 72 inclusive.

73 to 84 inclusive.

85 to 96 inclusive.

97 to 108 inclusive.

109 to 120 inclusive.

121 to 132 inclusive.

133 to 144 inclusive.

145 to 156 inclusive.

157 to 168 inclusive.

169 to 180 inclusive.

181 to 192 inclusive.

193 to 204 inclusive.

205 to 216 inclusive.

217 to 228 inclusive.

229 to 240 inclusive.

241 to 252 inclusive.

253 to 264 inclusive.

265 to 276 inclusive.

277 to 288 inclusive.

289 to 300 inclusive.

301 to 312 inclusive.

313 to 324 inclusive.

325 to 336 inclusive.

337 to 348 inclusive.

349 to 360 inclusive.

361 to 372 inclusive.

373 to 384 inclusive.

385 to 396 inclusive.

397 to 408 inclusive.

409 to 420 inclusive.

421 to 432 inclusive.

433 to 444 inclusive.

445 to 456 inclusive.

457 to 468 inclusive.

469 to 480 inclusive.

481 to 492 inclusive.

493 to 504 inclusive.